Self-promotion and gender inequality: Helping women break the shackles of modesty

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Motivation: Gender Gap

Some Statistics

- On average, women earn 8-18% less than men (Blau & Kahn, 2017);

- In S&P 500 companies females only account for 25.1% of executive level managers and 5.8% of the CEOs (Catalyst, 2017);

- Females only occupied 19.6% of the total seats in the US congress, 25% of the state legislature, 24% of statewide executives and 20.7% of mayors.
    -Similar story in most countries in the world.

The role of social norms and gender stereotypes

- Women are expected to behave differently from men.
    - Less competitive (Neiderle & Vesturland, 2004)
    - Less ambitious (Burzstyn et al. 2017)
    - More modest (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2011).

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Motivation: Modesty Norms and Social Image

In our social interactions, image concerns affect our actions and decisions
- We like others to perceive us as fair, charitable, honest, professional, successful *etc.*

Making good deeds visible is key to improving social image
- Self promotion is often required
- in competitive settings

However, self-promotion may not achieve intended outcome
- It is socially costly as it signals other qualities about oneself that is not socially desirable.
- the role of modesty norms

Social Norms and Gender Stereotypes

Reasons for gender specific expectations in behavior.

- Evolutionary Psychology arguments
    - Gender specific reproductive pressures
        - Men focus on resource provision, women focus on child bearing. (Buss, 1991)
    - Social Role Theory
        - Gender specific roles/division of labour in society (Eagly & Wood, 1989; Allesina and Nunn, 2013)
        - These distinct roles lead different psychological development and expectations of behaviour.
    - Mate Selection Theories
        - Men and women use different cues in selecting sexual mates (Feingold, 1992)

Impact of these expectations

- Men are **Agentic**
    - assertive, boastful, independent, mastering their environments
- Women are **Communal**
    - selfless and more caring for others, being more modest

Incongruence between role and action can be costly and women and men are aware of this.
- Women are less likely to exhibit their ambition (Burzstein *et al.* (2017).
- Women are more likely to engage in voluntary work and face larger sanctions when they refuse to do so. (Babcock *et al.* 2017a, 2017b).

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Modesty norms and gender stereotypes

From a young age women are socialised to be modest, in line with their behavior expectations. Bronstein, 2006

Women face psychological costs when self-promoting
- Due to breaking modesty norms (Smith and Huntoon, 2013)

- Due to fear of backlash from peers for breaking modesty norms/gender stereotypes (Rudman & Glick, 2001)

Implications for outcomes in the labour force
- Women may self-promote less or opt out of it altogether (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010)
- Puts them in a disadvantage in bargaining situations
- career progressions
- scholarships
- might have to downplay ambitions in some other way
- lower salary expectations
- Even in ("gender friendly" environment like) academia, women self cite less than men
- self-cite positively correlated with higher wages and promotions

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Research Questions

Using an economic experiment, we want to investigate

1) Whether is there a gender gap in self-promotion activity?

2) Whether systematically varying the intrinsic cost of self-promotion reduces gender gap in self-promotion?

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Our Experiment

Game: Dictator game with charities (Eckel & Grossman, 1996)

1. Each participant is given an endowment of $15 and asked whether they would like to donate any amount to a charity from a list of charities provided to them

2. Experimenter adds $0.5 for every $1 donation made conditional on any one of the following

   - Posting a pre-specified (treatment dependent) message on their
      Facebook wall (public)
   - Pending the same message to themselves via chat on Facebook
      (private)

Key features of the experiment

Two decisions are made simultaneously

- Decision to self-promote

- Decision on donations

- Sequential decision may lead to bias in this case

  - Is the decision to not self-promote due to low donations or modesty norms?

Preset messages in a *non-artificial* environment (Facebook)

- Ensures control: everyone has to post the same message

- Potential audience of the message are people participant knows.

  - social image concerns more salient.

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Treatments: First Strategy

Provision of a pro-social justification for self-promotion

T1 and T2: (HCB/HCR) "*Just donated {amount donated} to {Charity Name} from my participation fee of 15 dollars in a research activity at uni.*"

T3 and T4: (LCB/LCR): "*Just donated {amount donated} to {Charity Name} from my participation fee of 15 dollars in a research activity at uni. The organisers offered to match my donation if I posted this exact message on my Facebook wall.*"

HCR and *LCR* treatments were introduced to check whether donations changed due to modesty manipulations (we do not discuss today).

Online Panel

Online survey of participants (n=101) from the same subject pool (as participants) suggests that the LCB Message relative to HCB Message

- more modest (70% vs 30%),

- less boastful (66% vs 34%)

- more justified (83% vs 17%).

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Treatment: Second Strategy

In our second strategy, we reduce the intrinsic cost of self-promotion by providing a self-image rationalization for engaging in such actions

The decision space is altered.

HC-C: Participants can *only* donate if they self-promote.

Participants have to Self-promote with HC-R message.

    - No pro-social justification is provided *i.e.* modesty norm has to be broken.

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Hypothesis

H1: In the HC-B and HC-R treatments, self-promotion rates for men would be higher than that for women.

H2: Making the messages more modest (HC-B to LC-B and HC-R to LC-R) will increase self-promotion for women at a higher rate than men.

- Assume publicizing each message type, t, poses some costs from breaking the modesty norm, c_t.

- For each individual i, this cost is internalized depend on a parameter $\gamma_i > 0$,

- which measures how each individual i values the net benefits from adhering to the modesty norm.

- Intrinsic cost to each individual i from self-promoting is $\gamma_i c_t$.

- If γi for females > γi for males, then reduction in c_t will have a larger impact for women.

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Hypothesis

H3: Self-promotion rates will be higher in HC-C relative to HC-R.

Consider the subsample of individuals

- with a preference for making charitable donations,

- net benefit of making these donations public is not large enough to self-promote.

In HC-R, treatment these individuals will donate, but not self-promote

In HC-C, treatment, these individuals will donate and self-promote.

<u>Across Gender</u>

1) Women face higher costs from not donating (Engel, 2011) → Higher impact for women.

2) Women face higher costs of self-promotion using HC-R message → Lower impact for women.

Total Effect is not clear, thus an empirical question.

Experimental Protocol

282 Participants from RMIT BBL's database using standard protocols

- 129 males and 153 females

- Facebook account was a requirement

- Data collected using *Qualtrics*.

$5 show up fee and $15 endowment.

Three decision tasks:

- Choice of donation amount.
- Choice to self-promote (messages were verified on the spot, but not recorded)
- Choice of Charity (from a list of Save the Children, Doctors w/o Borders, Salvation Army, Cancer Council, Bush Heritage)
- Incentivized belief questions.

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Results: Immodest Messages
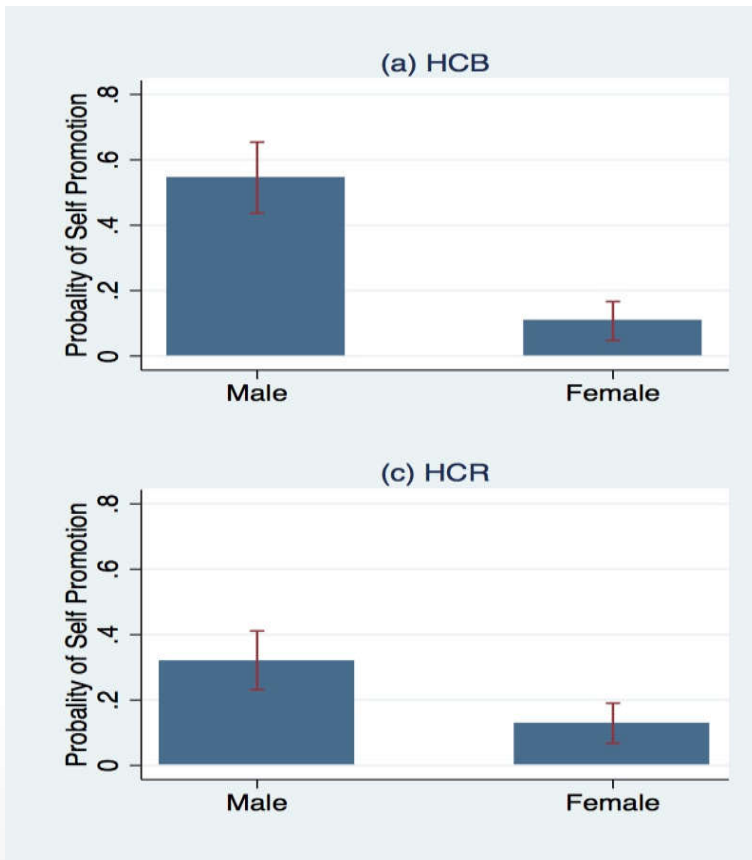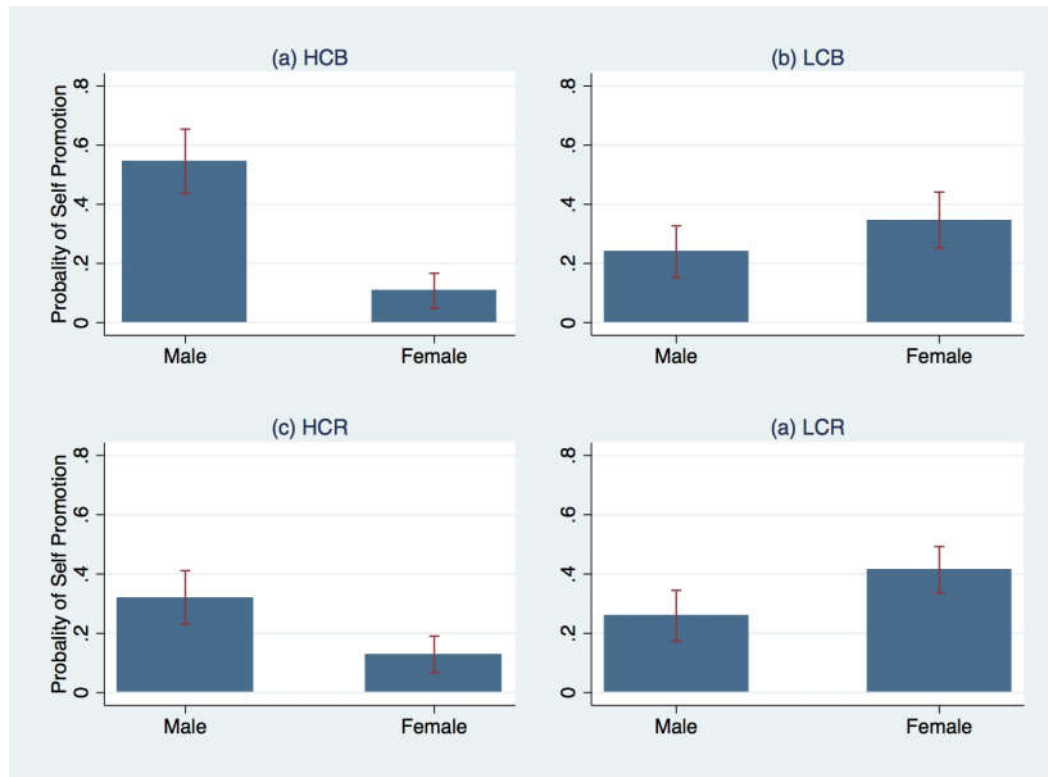

Self Promotion for men vs women

    HCB:: 54.5 vs 10.7 (p<0.01, n=50)

    HCR : 32.1 vs 12.9 (p =0.08, n=57)

Result 1: When the self-promotion message provides no justification, men are more likely to self-promote relative to women.

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Results: When messages are made modest

(a) HCB — Probability of Self Promotion, Male vs Female

(b) LCB — Male vs Female

(c) HCR — Probability of Self Promotion, Male vs Female

(a) LCR — Male vs Female

Self Promotion Males (HC vs LC)

- Baseline: 54.5 vs 24.0 ($p = 0.03$, n=47)

- Report: 32.1 vs 25.9 ($p = 0.61$, n=55)

Result 2: When costs are lowered, men do not increase self-promotion.

Self Promotion Females (HC vs LC)

- Baseline: 10.7 vs 34.6 ($p = 0.04$, n = 54)

- Report: 12.9 vs 41.5 ($p < 0.01$, n = 72)

Result 3: Option to justify self-promotion, increases self-promotion in women by over 3 times.
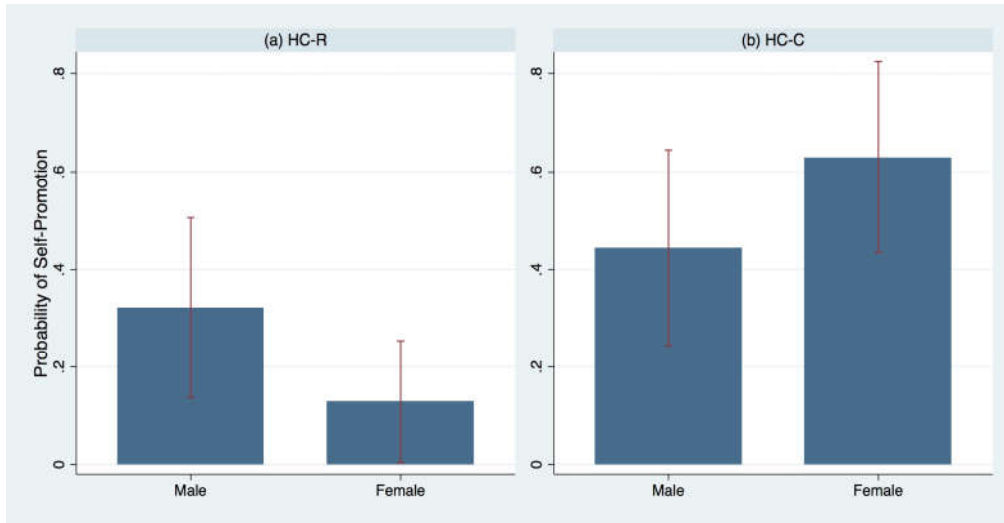
Initial gender gap no longer persists.

    Driven by increase in women's self-promotion and not men's decrease in self-promotion

    Male self-promotion in HC-B and HC-R treatment not different from

    Female self-promotion Rate in LC-B and LC-R treatment

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Compulsory Self-promotion

Self-Promotion Rates

Overall: 30.0 vs. 53.7, (p = 0.01, n=104)

Females: 12.9 vs. 62.7, (p <0.01, n= 58)

Males: 32.1 vs. 44.4 , (p =0.36, n=55)

Result 4: When self-promotion is made compulsory, it increases for only females

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Beliefs about Self-Promotion: Experiment Participants

We collected information on beliefs of play.

How many people posted message on Facebook wall?

<u>Male vs Females</u>
In HC treatments
Self Promoters: 67.7 vs 46.1 (p = 0.03)
Non- Self-Promoters: 31.5 vs 37.4 (p = 0.47)

In LC treatments
Self Promoters: 65.1 vs 66.9 (p = 0.68)
Non- Self-Promoters: 43.6 vs 38.1 (p= 0.33)

<u>Self Promoters vs Non Self-promoters</u>
Males
HC = 67.7 vs 31.5 (p < 0.01)
LC = 65.1 vs 43.6 (p < 0.05)

Females
HC = 46.1 vs 37.4 (p = 0.41)
LC = 66.9 vs 38.1 (p < 0.02)

Result 5: Providing a justification to self-promote in the predesigned message has a larger effect on women's beliefs about self-promotion behavior compared to men.

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Beliefs about Self-Promotion: Survey Participants

For experimental participants, beliefs might be influenced by decisions.

Survey participants asked to predict behavior in the experiment (incentivized)

Predictions about experimental participants: *HC vs LC*

For females: increase by 13 ppt. (p <0.01)

For males: increase by 5.8 ppt. (p <0.01)

Difference in rate of increase is statistically significant (p <0.01)

These results are in line with Result 5 and can potentially explain the mechanism behind Result 2: making the messages more modest has a larger impact on women than men leading to the elimination of the gender gap in self-promotion behavior.

Final Remarks

- Eliminating gender inequality has been a top priority

  - Particularly in the labor markets where it is more challenging.

  - Gender stereotypes shape the choices of men and women in life.

- We show the expectation of being modest is indeed a problem for women.

  - Women are significantly pre-disposed to self-promote when the perceive the action as immodest.

  - When the actions of self-promotion is made more modest women respond by increasing their self-promotion

  - Similarly when women are confronted with the choice of being modest vs being communal, they choose the latter.

    - potential applicability in the workplace.

    - employees may be asked to make their professional achievements public in an internal newsletter, linking each achievement to a pro-social action to be implemented by the firm.

    - The second part is crucial in the framing of the decision.

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Effect on Donations

There is no systematic effects of our treatment on donations.

There is no systematic gender effects across treatments either.

The only thing that is robust is that individuals who self-promote on average donate more than those who do not.

	No SP	SP	p-value
HCB	4.3	7.1	0.03
HCR	5.4	7.5	0.13
LCB	5.5	7.9	0.10
LCR	3.5	6.6	<0.01

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Regressions: Low vs High cost

	(Full)	(Baseline)	(Report)
Coefficient Estimate			
LowCost	-0.681**	-1.175***	-0.317
	(0.286)	(0.420)	(0.303)
Female	-1.015***	-1.302***	-0.812***
	(0.234)	(0.300)	(0.269)
LowCost*Female	1.534***	2.017***	1.256***
	(0.334)	(0.271)	(0.427)
No_Report	-0.017		
	(0.187)		
Donations Made	0.105***	0.120***	0.101***
	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.026)
Beliefs about Self-Promotion	2.416***	3.132***	1.963***
	(0.384)	(0.494)	(0.456)
Beliefs about Avg Donation	-0.037	-0.050	-0.015
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.046)
Constant	-1.730***	-1.897***	-1.819***
	(0.286)	(0.570)	(0.262)
Difference Estimate			
(Male- Female)|LowCost	-0.142***	-0.128***	-0.14*
(Male- Female)|HighCost	0.245***	0.289***	0.203***
(HighCost - LowCost)|Female	-0.226***	-0.17**	-0.266***
(HighCost -LowCost)|Male	0.161***	0.246***	0.080
Observations	228	101	127

Probit Regressions
- Average Marginal Effects
- Std Error clustered at the session.

Results
- Most of the univariete results validated.
- Donations positively correlated with self-promotion decision

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